



## Harvesting shellfish in Quebec

To find out which shellfish gathering areas are safe, call one of the following telephone numbers:

### CHARLEVOIX, NORTH SHORE AND ANTICOSTI ISLAND

- from Ile-aux-Coudres to Trinity Bay: (800) 463-8558
- from Trinity Bay to Natashquan including Anticosti Island: (800) 463-1736
- from Natashquan to Blanc-Sablon: (800) 463-8558

### LOWER ST. LAWRENCE AND GASPÉ

- St-Roch-des-Aulnaies to Gaspé Point: (800) 463-0607
- Gaspé Point to Matapédia River: (800) 463-4204

### MAGDALEN ISLANDS

(418) 986-3882

See also the following Web sites:

Environment Canada:  
[www.qc.gc.ca](http://www.qc.gc.ca)

Canadian Food Inspection Agency:  
[www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)

Fisheries and Oceans Canada:  
[www.qc.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](http://www.qc.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

Softshell Clam  
*Mya arenaria*  
Mye commune



#### Size

Can reach a size of 9 cm (3.5 in.), though a specimen measuring 16.5 cm (6.5 in.) has been found.

#### Colour

Generally milky white

#### Shape

Valves elliptical and unequal

#### Fishing Gear

Hand digging

Blue Mussel  
*Mytilus edulis*  
Moule bleue



#### Size

Can reach a size of 10 cm (4 in.)

#### Colour

Bluish-black shell.  
Smooth surface. Interior pearly white, with violet-blue background.

#### Shape

Variable, can be straight, convex or concave

#### Fishing Gear

Hand digging

Arctic Wedge Clam  
*Mesodesma arctatum*  
Clovisse



#### Size

Can reach 4 cm (1.5 in.)

#### Colour

Greyish white

#### Shape

Wedge-shape

#### Fishing Gear

Hand digging

Sea Scallop  
*Placopecten magellanicus*  
Pétoncle géant



#### Size

Generally reaches 12.5 to 20 cm (5 to 8 in.)

#### Colour

Interior glossy white, upper shell convex and reddish brown and lower shell flat and white

#### Shape

Nearly circular, with two nearly symmetrical wings

#### Fishing Gear

Dredge

Iceland Scallop  
*Chlamys islanda*  
Pétoncle d'Islande



#### Size

Ranges from 7 to 10 cm (2.75 to 4 in.)

#### Colour

Convex shell grey, reddish brown, or chalk white, both inside and outside

#### Shape

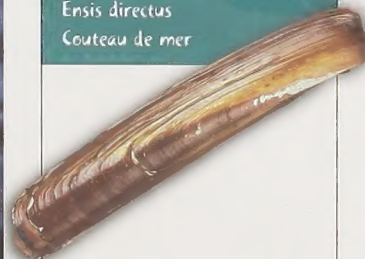
Nearly circular, with two asymmetrical wings and about 50 radial ribs

#### Fishing Gear

Dredge

# Know your shellfish

Common Razor Clam  
*Ensis directus*  
Couteau de mer



#### Size

Can reach 25 cm (10 in.) in length, generally 6 times longer than it is wide

#### Colour

Olive green with a purple-lavender triangular space

#### Shape

Knife or razor-shaped

#### Fishing Gear

Hand digging or hydraulic dredge

Atlantic Surf Clam  
*Spisula solidissima*  
Mactre de l'Atlantique



#### Size

Can reach a size of 15 cm (6 in.); a specimen measuring 22.5 cm (9 in.) has been found

#### Colour

Yellowish-white under the rounded portion

#### Shape

V-shaped

#### Fishing Gear

Hand digging or hydraulic dredge

Stimpson Surf Clam  
*Mactromeris polynyma*  
Mactre de stimpson



#### Size

Can reach a size of 15 cm (6 in.) or more

#### Colour

Yellowish-white, hard to distinguish from surf clam

#### Shape

V-shaped

#### Fishing Gear

Hydraulic dredge

Common Periwinkle  
*Littorina littorea*  
Littorine ou Bigorneau



#### Size

Ranges from 2.5 cm (1 in.) to 4.0 cm (1.5 in.)

#### Colour

Olive green ranging to grey or brownish-yellow, often streaked with dark red or brown; the shell can also be practically black

#### Shape

Spiral

#### Fishing Gear

Hand digging

Common Whelk  
*Buccinum undatum*  
Buccin commun



#### Size

Can reach a size of 10 cm (4 in.)

#### Colour

Chalk grey to yellowish or light hazel

#### Shape

Spiral

#### Fishing Gear

Whelk pot

Moon Snail (or Moon Shell)  
*Lunatia heros*  
Lunatie de l'Atlantique



#### Size

Can reach 11 cm (4.25 in.)

#### Colour

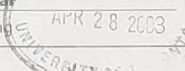
Dirty white to brown-grey

#### Shape

Globular, spiral, and smooth

#### Fishing Gear

Hand digging







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Varieties of shellfish



CONTAMINATION RISK

### Closed areas for shellfish harvesting

Pursuant to the Management of Contaminated Fisheries Regulations and an order made under these regulations, no person shall fish for or catch and retain any species of shellfish in this area.

Any person who contravenes these regulations is liable to prosecution under the Fisheries Act.

For more information concerning closed areas:

Base Contact: 1-800-463-8338  
 Sept. Dec: 1-800-463-1736  
 North Coast: 1-800-463-0907  
 South Coast: 1-800-463-4204  
 Magdalen Islands: 1-418-996-3332



Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Provinces and Territories

Canada

# Harvesting shellfish in Quebec



Shellfish gathering is a very popular pursuit in Quebec. There are over 300 harvesting areas, or shellfish beds, scattered along Quebec's shores. Each year, thousands of people flock to them to either eat or sell the shellfish they collect.

Sadly, not everyone takes the trouble to check whether the shellfish taken are safe to eat.

Yet the risks are very real!

### The quality of the shellfish depends on that of the water

There are two main families of shellfish that pose potential risks:

- **Bivalves**, including clams, mussels and scallops, feed by filtering plankton from the water. The plankton may contain microscopic toxic algae.
- **Gastropods** may be carnivores, like whelks, or herbivores, like the common Periwinkle. The carnivorous species that often prey on bivalves are the ones of interest here.

The quality of the marine environment has a direct impact on the quality of the shellfish. If the water in which they live is contaminated with bacteria, toxic algae or chemical pollutants, these substances and micro-organisms will accumulate in their flesh and make them hazardous to human health.

Two toxins are particularly dangerous: **paralytic shellfish poison (PSP)** and, a recent discovery occasionally reported in our waters, **domoic acid**. These two toxins are natural products of microscopic algae living in the plankton, and the shellfish that eat these algae accumulate the toxins in their tissues.

Eating shellfish containing these toxins can lead to disorders of the human nervous system that can be fatal. Though not lethal, other biotoxins produced by the algae of the St. Lawrence can cause serious digestive and intestinal problems.



### The Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program

There are three federal government agencies working together to run the **Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program**: Environment Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.



### Water quality...

Environment Canada monitors water quality in areas where shellfish are harvested.

To be safe for human consumption, shellfish must live and be harvested in beds where the quality of the water meets very stringent standards. It sometimes happens, though, that the marine environment where these creatures live is polluted by municipal wastewater, wastewater from poorly maintained septic tanks and sumps, untreated industrial waste, run-off from farmland and feedlots, chemical contamination, etc. Eating shellfish from polluted waters is hazardous to the health.

Environment Canada analyses the bacteriological quality of the water of shellfish beds and recommends closing beds where the water is found to be polluted. This department also works with various other government agencies and local communities to get closed beds reopened.

### Shellfish quality...

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency monitors the processing of edible shellfish for compliance with federal standards.

Accordingly, the Agency monitors the quality of the shellfish in harvesting areas by conducting scientific assays of the toxins they may contain. Where toxin levels exceed standards, the Agency recommends closing the affected beds.

The Agency also ensures that fish and seafood processing facilities are built and operated according to strict standards and have in place effective quality assurance systems to protect consumers. Additionally, the Agency monitors all fish and seafood imports and exports.



### Opening and closing of shellfish beds...

Fisheries and Oceans Canada opens and closes shellfish beds at the behest of either Environment Canada or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and notifies all interested parties.

Fisheries officers post harvesting bans, patrol closed beds to ensure that no unsafe shellfish are taken, and if necessary, violators are ticketed.

### A matter of health!

It is the duty of those harvesting shellfish to inform themselves about the conditions prevailing in the areas where they are gathering and to abide by the bans clearly posted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada around closed beds.

Since there are poachers willing to blatantly disregard official notices and collect and pass on contaminated shellfish, the authorities are counting on a vigilant public for help.

Any act of poaching spotted can be reported by calling 1-800-463-9057.

Who knows? After a poacher has sold contaminated shellfish to a fishmonger, they may end up in your plate. Think about it!

